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DOI:

[10.1111/j.1468-5965.2008.01838_16.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2008.01838_16.x)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Kienzle, B. (2009). Book Review of Crafting EU Security Policy: In Pursuit of a European Identity, by S.B. Anderson. *JOURNAL OF COMMON MARKET STUDIES*, 47(1), 214. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2008.01838_16.x

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Crafting EU Security Policy: In Pursuit of a European Identity, by S.B. Anderson (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008, ISBN 9781588265821); x + 235pp., £37.50 hb.

In this refreshing book, S.B. Anderson addresses a crucial but too often neglected question on EU security policy: Why does the EU have a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) at all? As she rightly points out, given the existence of NATO and the lack of clear external security threats since the end of the Cold War, the answer is far from obvious. In line with constructivist theoretical thinking, she argues that the driving force behind the development of ESDP is the policy's usefulness to strengthen a common pan-European identity among the Union's integration-wary citizens. In other words, the motivation behind ESDP is not security or defence but European integration.

The book demonstrates, in particular, how European elites have used ESDP for identity formation and how the development of ESDP follows rather public opinion than practical considerations. Throughout the book – especially in the rich fourth chapter – the United States is presented as the main referent for Europe allowing the EU to distinguish itself from the United States and, thus, to strengthen its own identity. The author embeds her central arguments in a conceptual framework based on nation-building theories that emphasize the importance of foreign and security policy for the formation of a common identity and underpins them with critical discourse analysis. Despite the strong focus on theory, the book is very accessible and avoids the excessive use of EU-jargon. However, Anderson tends to overstretch her arguments. In this regard, two examples can be highlighted: First, she goes so far as to argue that ESDP performs the function of nation-building within the EU, even though it might have been sufficient (and maybe more convincing) to stick to the less provocative term, identity formation. Secondly, although she touches on or even discusses them, alternative, and not necessarily contradictory, explanations for the motivation behind ESDP are too easily dismissed, in particular the material benefits of ESDP such as the usefulness of flexible and, above all, independent EU military capabilities. Nevertheless, in general, she highlights and explains an extremely important aspect of the motivation behind ESDP and the significance of ESDP for European integration.

In sum, the book is a welcome and thought-provoking contribution to the academic debate on the origins of ESDP and its role in European integration. It should be read by all those who seek a new perspective on the fundamentals of ESDP and new ideas on the role of security and defence in European integration.

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